

PREFERENCES OF KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE TEACHERS
CONCERNING THREE TYPES OF KINDERGARTEN CURRICULA

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by
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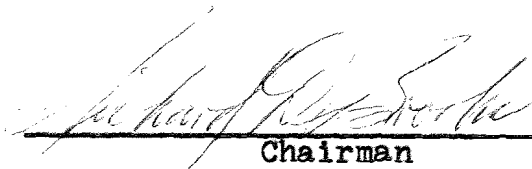
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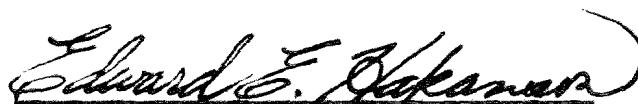
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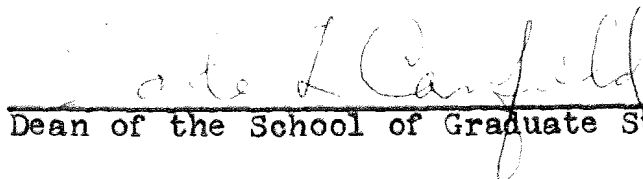

Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

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CHAPTER I

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

What type kindergarten program appears to be most effective in meeting the educational needs of young children? A wide divergence of opinion on this question is becoming increasingly evident as greater attention is directed toward the area of early childhood education. One sign of this increasing interest in the education of the younger child is the preschool programs that are being developed in many sections of the country for four and even three-year-olds. These programs range from a format that is completely free play to some that include definite teaching of basic skills. Even the government has shown some concern in this area by initiating projects such as Headstart and Follow Through. These programs have awakened in many people's minds the question of how much a young child can learn or should be expected to learn.

I. THE FOCUS ON KINDERGARTEN

Much of the resulting controversy has centered around the kindergarten, primarily because it is the lowest level of public instruction that is generally offered. Since preschools are usually privately financed and privately administered, with no required attendance, the parents have a

great deal of choice. They may choose among the available preschools and find one that has a program they favor or they may choose not to have their child attend at all.

In comparison, kindergarten attendance is generally required and the child is supposed to attend the school in his immediate neighborhood. In this school any one of a wide variety of programs, ranging again from free play to highly academic, may be encountered. In this situation, the parents who would prefer a different type of kindergarten program for their child must speak out and make their opinions known. They must assume a more active role, thereby making differing opinions more obvious to all concerned.

Researchers, educators, textbook companies, etc. who have developed programs for young children are also directing much of their attention to public kindergartens. Undoubtedly they are hoping that more students may be reached by this means. Whether this interest is motivated by thoughts of financial gain through sale of materials or only by dedication to a program they believe in, the result is much the same; they again renew the question of what and how to teach young children.

II. THE CLASSROOM TEACHERS: WHAT ARE THEIR VIEWS?

Parents, administrators, and researchers working with young children have all become very vocal on the subject of

kindergarten education. However, little has been heard from the teachers who work with these children every day. What are their opinions? Is there one type of program which they prefer over the others? Is there a program which they generally feel to be less effective with young children? In short, have they any guidance to offer parents and others who are concerned with providing the best possible education for young children?

Questions to be Answered

More specifically the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What per cent of kindergarten teachers in Iowa favor each of the three basic types of kindergarten programs?
2. What per cent of first grade teachers in Iowa favor each of the three basic types of kindergarten programs?
3. What similarities and differences exist in the preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers concerning kindergarten programming?
4. What, if any, relationships exist between program preferences and such variables as age, teaching experience, and training?
5. What agreement is there between expressed preferences and actual programs in use?

Sources of Information

In order to answer the five questions listed above, the following sources were used:

1. Data on Iowa Schools - This provided a list of the Iowa school districts ranked in order of size from largest to smallest.
2. Iowa Educational Directory 1970-1971 School Year - This contained a list of the addresses and phone

- numbers of all Iowa school districts and their individual elementary schools. It also named the principal of each elementary school.
3. An opinionnaire was also used. It was constructed and validated by the researcher.
 4. The kindergarten and first grade teachers in Iowa were the primary source of information for this study.

Definition of Basic Terms

In order to insure accurate communication with the teachers involved in the study, three basic terms were defined in the opinionnaire. These terms describe three basic types of kindergarten curricula which were labeled as "developmental", "readiness", and "academic".

The "developmental" kindergarten stresses play as the child's natural method of learning. This program seeks to encourage the child's intellectual growth by providing a stimulating variety of play experiences within the classroom. No specific skills or subjects are taught and no workbooks are used. This program is primarily concerned with enriching the present world of the child.

The "readiness" kindergarten does not look unfavorably on play and does include this in its program. Added to this, however, is work on some basic skills such as writing of one's name, visual and auditory discrimination, counting, and other simple number concepts. Reading readiness workbooks are often used but not all are pressured for mastery if they are not felt to be ready for this type of instruc-

tion.

The "academic" kindergarten program is more structured and formal than the readiness program. Often time allotments are made for the teaching of specific subjects (i.e. math the first twenty-five minutes, then science, etc.). Reading, writing of sentences and even simple stories, arithmetic, and scientific facts are taught. These skills and subjects are presented with the idea that the children can and should achieve some mastery of them. Play is not rated very highly as a learning experience.

These terms and definitions were developed from a study of the related literature in the field of early childhood and kindergarten education. The views or opinions expressed in the literature studied are described in the following section.

III. RELATED LITERATURE

From relative obscurity, the kindergarten has developed into a well known and important part of our educational system. Kindergartens and preschools first began to achieve widespread attention because of some national emergencies: the depression and the two world wars.¹ These schools were mainly established to help mothers who had to go to work and

¹Sarah H. Leeper and others, Good Schools for Young Children (New York: MacMillan Co., 1960), pp. 18-19.

many were not very educational in nature.¹ As time went on, however, they improved their programs until the public began to value them as an important educational asset. The 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth demonstrated this new respect for early childhood education when it recommended "that kindergarten be made an integral part of the tax supported public school system in all communities. . . ."² Supporters of kindergarten programs were pleased with its acceptance as a part of our country's educational system, but worried that with this acceptance would come the inclination to make it more subject matter oriented like the other grades.³

This may indeed be happening today, for kindergarten is fast becoming a center of controversy. Early kindergarten programs stressed emotional, physical, and social development and often gave little attention to intellectual or cognitive development. In an effort to remedy this, some of today's kindergarten programs may be heading for the other extreme.⁴ Educators, parents, and a concerned general public are all beginning to "take sides" on this issue and

¹Jerome Leavitt (ed.), Nursery-Kindergarten Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1958), p. 1.

²J. Foster and N. Headly, Education in the Kindergarten (New York: American Book Co., 1966), p. 31.

³Ibid., p. iv. ⁴Leeper and others, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

to make their opinions known on the subject of kindergarten education.

Unfortunately too little research has been done in this area and kindergarten teachers have been given very little help in planning curriculum or instruction for their level.¹ Neith Headly states that "the kindergarten needs the further support of research as it strives to meet the needs of today's television and spaceminded five-year-olds."²

A great deal of pressure is beginning to be placed on the kindergarten teacher to begin formal instruction.³ Some parents, criticizing the kindergarten program as unstimulating, are setting up private kindergartens.⁴ Administrators who evaluate teachers only by looking at the children's performance on end-of-the-year tests are also exerting a subtle type of pressure toward workbooks and drill.⁵

¹ Eveline Omwake, "Project Follow Through," Young Children, XXIV (March, 1969), 194.

² Foster and Headly, op. cit., p. 36.

³ Gail G. Gallagher, "Critical Analysis of our Times: The Aims of Kindergarten," Journal of Education, CXLVIII (October, 1965), 58.

⁴ Walter K. Monroe (ed.), Encyclopedia of Educational Research, American Educational Research Association (New York: MacMillan Co., 1960), p. 325.

⁵ Jerome Leavitt (ed.), Nursery-Kindergarten Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1958), p. 9.

The people exerting these pressures for a more academic kindergarten program are doing so for three main reasons. First of all, they believe that children are different today than they were in the past. The impact of TV is often cited as a factor in the change. Television has helped to give the child a broader range of experience and has increased his vocabulary so that he now starts school with a one year advantage in vocabulary over students who began school in the past.¹ A higher standard of living, with toys and other stimulating objects readily available, has also changed the children of today.² Because of this country's increasing population mobility and the popularity of long distance summer trips on modern highway and interstate systems, the young child has often seen a great deal more than his predecessors did at the same age.³ Many more children are also coming into kindergarten with previous nursery school experience. ". . . in general children are entering kindergarten with more maturity in social and intellectual development than before."⁴ Because of this, many people feel that the kindergarten program should be made more academic.

Those favoring the developmental approach in kinder-

¹Monroe, op. cit., p. 323.

²Leeper and others, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

³Ibid., pp. 12-13. ⁴Monroe, loc. cit.

garten agree that the child has changed in some aspects but believe that these are just surface changes.¹ Neith Headly states,

Yes, both the experience and the vocabulary of today's children differs greatly from the experience and the vocabulary of children of bygone days. But, by and large, the children themselves are not very different. . . . Today's five-year-olds have the same social, emotional, intellectual and physical urges and capabilities that children have had through the years.²

Educators in the developmental programs realize that there is evidence that the kindergarten program needs to be made more challenging, but they do not believe that starting formal subject matter in kindergarten is the way to do it.

A second group of reasons cited for making the kindergarten curriculum more academic concerns the changes occurring in the world. The explosion of knowledge, Sputnik and the advent of the space age, and the growing necessity for education beyond the public school years³ have made many people, particularly parents, concerned that education is not begun soon enough. American schools are often rather nervously compared to the European and Russian systems. However, a comparison of the early childhood programs of the

¹ M. Rudolph and D. Cohen, Kindergarten-A Year of Learning (New York: Meredith Publishing Co., 1964), p. v.

² Foster and Headly, op. cit., p. iii.

³ Leeper and others, op. cit., pp. 5, 21.

United States and such countries as France, West Germany, Denmark, and Russia reveal no significant differences. They do not have academic programs either.

Those favoring developmental curriculums also stress that the stability of early learning should be ascertained before beginning a more academic program in kindergarten. At this point, very few longitudinal studies have been conducted to measure the stability of early learning and those completed have shown mixed results.¹ Long term goals of education must be kept in mind and progress should be measured in terms of what the student is able to do when he finishes all of his schooling - not just one year of it. Almy found that academic acceleration sometimes results in "pseudo concepts" which the child can only apply in the situation in which they were learned. Because of this lack of generalization and application these "concepts" will be of little value in future learning. The concepts were more stable and meaningful when presented later, when the child had obtained more maturity.²

Many experts in the field of early childhood education also fear that early stress on academics will cause tensions and frustrations in the child that could be harmful

¹R. Hess and R. Bear, Early Education (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), p. 40.

²Leeper and others, op. cit., p. 118.

to all phases of his development.¹ Handwriting, for example, used to be taught in many kindergartens but was dropped because lack of muscle coordination made it so difficult that it was producing tensions in many of the children.² "Child development specialists caution that too intensive emphasis on academic training, too early, might make later learning more difficult to achieve."³

In the developmental kindergarten, and to some extent in the readiness kindergarten, play is considered to be the child's natural method of learning. Frederick Froebel and G. Stanley Hall, early leaders in the field of childhood education, stressed the significance of play as a learning experience for the child.⁴ Paschal states that for the young child, work and play are almost the same thing. He also comments that it is unfortunate that more of the

¹C. D. Wills and W. H. Stegman, Living in the Kindergarten (Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1950), p. 56; R. Hess and R. Bear, Early Education (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), p. 44; Gail G. Gallagher, "Critical Analysis of our Times: The Aims of Kindergarten," Journal of Education, CLXXXVIII (October, 1965), 58.

²Wills and Stegman, op. cit., p. 50.

³Leeper and others, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴Sarah H. Leeper and others, Good Schools for Young Children (New York: MacMillan Co., 1960), p. 4; J. Foster and N. Headly, Education in the Kindergarten (New York: American Book Co., 1966), p. 42.

general public doesn't understand this.¹ Susan Isaac listed three functions of play as: "(1) play leads to discovery, reasoning, and thought; (2) play is a bridge to social relations; and (3) play leads to emotional equilibrium."² A teacher can provide for learning just by being aware of the educational aspects of everyday kindergarten experience.³

The third reason given for encouraging the development of an academic kindergarten curriculum is that research has shown that it is possible for young children to learn a great deal more than people previously thought them capable of learning.⁴ Programs such as the Initial Teaching Alphabet, the Omar Moore Reading Experiment, and the Denver Reading Program have shown that it is possible to teach reading to three, four, and five-year-olds.⁵ Eleanor Maccoby says that teaching of intellectual skills to this young a group is not socially or emotionally harmful and may even be beneficial.⁶ Bereiter and Engelmann have tried a

¹ Ilse Forest, Early Years at School (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1949), p. 3.

² M. Rudolph and D. Cohen, Kindergarten-A Year of Learning (New York: Meredith Publishing Co., 1964), p. 56.

³ Foster and Headly, op. cit., p. 492.

⁴ Leeper and others, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵ Foster and Headly, op. cit., p. 35.

⁶ Hess and Bear, op. cit., pp. 191-192.

very academic and structured program with Head Start youngsters and felt that it worked very well. They used direct teaching of skills, particularly language skills, instead of the traditional group activities and trips used in other Head Start programs.¹ They had an experimental group (their group) and a control group (traditional Head Start) which were matched on the basis of age, race, and neighborhood. They administered the Pre-school Inventory Test and the Concept Inventory Test at the beginning and end of the six week program. At the end of the program the experimental group scored 100 per cent higher on both tests.² The teachers of the experimental group commented that they felt the children had enjoyed the experience and had developed new pride in themselves because of their accomplishments. A criticism of this type of program has been made by Leeper, Dales, Skipper, and Witherspoon, who comment:

It is not surprising that children learn specific facts or skills more rapidly when they are formally taught rather than when expected to learn them incidentally. The important question is whether these are the right ones and whether they will truly be effective in the later school and personal life of the child involved.³

Young children can be taught much more than was

¹"A New Approach to Head Start: the Bereiter and Engelmann Method," Phi Delta Kappan, IXL (March, 1968), 387.

²Ibid., p. 386.

³Leeper and others, op. cit., p. 46.

previously realized, but the question remains: does can mean should?¹ Many educators remain strongly opposed to the academic kindergarten curriculum on this basis. They maintain that there is no evidence that formal subject matter has any real value for young children.²

The majority of the stress on academics in kindergarten has been directed at the area of reading. Three points of view generally are voiced about reading at this level. The developmental and readiness kindergarten programs both feel that reading should not be mandatory and that it can cause frustration and dislike of reading if overstressed.³ The readiness kindergarten would probably use workbooks, though, and many educators using the developmental program do not approve of workbooks. They claim that there is no evidence to show that workbooks help build a foundation for further learning in reading or any other area.⁴ A teacher

¹ J. Foster and N. Headly, Education in the Kindergarten (New York: American Book Co., 1966), p. iii; R. Hess and R. Bear, Early Education (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), p. 39.

² Foster and Headly, op. cit., p. 35.

³ C. D. Wills and W. H. Stegman, Living in the Kindergarten (Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1950), pp. 49, 200; Jerome Leavitt (ed.), Nursery-Kindergarten Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1958), p. 306; M. Rudolph and D. Cohen, Kindergarten-A Year of Learning (New York: Meredith Publishing Co., 1964), p. 9.

⁴ Neith Headly, The Kindergarten: Its Place in the Program of Education (New York: The Center of Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1965), p. 97; Jerome Leavitt (ed.), Nursery-Kindergarten Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1958), p. 9.

in a readiness program would also be more likely to let an individual child begin reading if she felt that he was ready for it. Both pushing a child to read or holding one back are generally thought to be wrong by those favoring the readiness approach.¹ A teacher in a developmental program would be more likely to feel that the child wouldn't be harmed by waiting.² He would probably attempt to provide other enriching experience instead of going into reading in a formal manner. It might be felt that reading at this stage of development could cut the child off from too many social experiences which also provide learning.³

Some people, however, do feel that reading should be formally taught in kindergarten. Increasing numbers of parents are beginning to feel this way.⁴ A study in Palo Alto, California, used an experimental plan in which half the kindergarten class was taught reading and the other half had a less academic program. At the end of second grade the children who waited to begin reading did better than those

¹J. DeBoer and M. Dallmann, The Teaching of Reading (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), pp. 42-43.

²Rudolph and Cohen, op. cit., p. 95.

³Ibid., p. 9.

⁴Leeper and others, op. cit., p. 86.

taught reading in kindergarten.¹ More studies of this type are needed in order to determine the effectiveness of early childhood academic education.

Most of the experts on early childhood education seem to favor the developmental kindergarten program. There appears to be much less support for the academic approach to learning. The suggestion was even made that the primary grades should be removed from such pressures for achievement and mastery of academic content and made more like the developmental kindergarten.²

IV. DESIGN OF THE INVESTIGATION

After studying the related literature in the area of early childhood education and choosing the questions to be answered by the study, an opinionnaire was constructed. It was validated before use by consultation with an advisor and a trial test with four teachers, two from the kindergarten level and two from first grade. The opinionnaire was designed to answer the five questions listed previously and was short in length, only 3 pages, to encourage response.

Two different cover letters were also written and

¹Monroe, op. cit., p. 326.

²B. H. Hains and R. J. Fisher, "Distortions in the Kindergarten," Young Children, XXIV (May, 1969), 283; John Thomas, "From Kindergarten to What?," National Elementary Principal, XXXVII (January, 1968), 44.

approved by an advisor. One letter was designed for the principals of the elementary schools selected. It explained the importance of the study and asked him to select a kindergarten teacher and a first grade teacher in his school to participate. Also included with the letter sent to each principal were two copies of the opinionnaire, two stamped envelopes addressed to the researcher, and two cover letters written for the teachers. The return envelopes were marked with a numerical code so that it would be possible to determine where to send follow up letters if they were necessary.

Population and the Selection of the Sample

There are two populations which were sampled in this study. First, the population consisting of all the kindergarten teachers in the state of Iowa, and secondly, the population consisting of all first grade teachers in the state of Iowa. These two groups of teachers were chosen because they are more likely to be familiar with and interested in the kindergarten programs in operation today.

A sample was selected by using a list of the Iowa school districts ranked in order of size from largest to smallest. Every third district was selected. From the numbers 1, 2, and 3, a random selection was made in order to determine whether to start with the first, second, or third school district on the list.

Once the districts were selected, individual elemen-

tary schools were selected inside these districts. In districts with five or less elementary schools, only one school was randomly selected. In districts with six or more elementary schools, every third elementary school was selected. A number from one through three was drawn in order to determine which of the first three schools to begin with in these districts.

A total of 202 elementary schools were selected for the study with two opinionnaires going to each school. The opinionnaires were sent to the principal with the request that he select a kindergarten and first grade teacher to take part in the study.

Data and Instrumentation

The instrument used to obtain the data for this study was an opinionnaire. It was constructed and validated by the researcher and was designed to measure the preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers in regard to three types of kindergarten curricula. The validation procedure consisted of consultation with an advisor and a trial test by four teachers. In its final form the opinionnaire was three pages in length. A copy of the opinionnaire and cover letters will be found in Appendix A.

The data obtained from the opinionnaire was primarily in the form of checked responses which indicated the

respondents' preferences as to kindergarten programs. There were two open-end questions which pertained to age and number of years of teaching experience. Categories were determined for these variables after all the returned opinionnaires had been examined.

Analysis

The returned opinionnaires were first given a brief preliminary examination so that categories could be determined for the two open-end questions on age and number of years teaching experience. They were then sorted by hand into two groups according to grade taught. Percentages of each group preferring each of the three types of kindergarten programs were tabulated by hand. These percentages were put in the form of tables and were used to answer questions 1, 2, and 3 posed in the study.

In answering the fourth question, the responses of the group of kindergarten teachers and the group of first grade teachers were analyzed separately in regard to relationships between program preferences and the variables of age, teaching experience, and training. Then the two groups were recombined and the analysis repeated with the same three variables. The teachers' selection of statements related to the three types of kindergarten programs were also analyzed in terms of the three variables. The result-

ing percentages were put into tables.

For question 5, the responses of each teacher were examined for agreement between the type of program selected as a first preference and the type of kindergarten program being used. Percentages of those dissatisfied with the program currently in use were tabulated for the kindergarten teachers, the first grade teachers, and both groups combined. The opinionnaires were also examined to see which programs the dissatisfied teachers were using. The number of those dissatisfied with each program was compared to the total number of teachers using the program.

CHAPTER II

PREFERENCES CONCERNING KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM

In an effort to evaluate the preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers concerning kindergarten programming, an opinionnaire was devised and sent to 404 Iowa teachers who were working at these two grade levels. This opinionnaire was designed to provide answers for five specific questions and the data pertaining to each of them is described in this chapter.

I. THE VIEWS OF THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

The first question posed in this study concerned the kindergarten teachers and their preferences among the three basic types of kindergarten programs. These three types (developmental, readiness, and academic) were defined in the opinionnaire and the teachers were asked to rate these programs 1, 2, and 3 in the order of their preference for them. The results are summarized in Table I. A total of 149 kindergarten teachers replied. The number of teachers (N) making each choice is indicated along with the percentage (column and row percentage totals equal approximately 100).

The readiness kindergarten program was most frequently selected as the first choice, with 85.8 per cent of the kindergarten teachers choosing it compared to 8.7 per

TABLE I
PREFERENCES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS AMONG
THREE TYPES OF KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Program	First Preference		Second Preference		Third Preference	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Develop- mental	13	8.7%	87	58.3%	49	32.8%
Readiness	128	85.8%	21	14.1%	0	0%
Academic	8	5.4%	41	27.5%	100	67%

cent for the developmental program and 5.4 per cent for the academic. As a second preference the developmental program received the highest percentage of choices. The academic program was rated as a third preference by 67 per cent of the kindergarten teachers.

II. THE VIEWS OF THE FIRST GRADE TEACHERS

The first grade teachers received opinionnaires identical to those sent to the kindergarten teachers and used the same procedure in rating the three types of kindergarten programs. A total of 136 first grade teachers responded and their opinions are shown in Table II.

As a first choice, 88.8 per cent of the first grade teachers preferred the readiness program. The academic program was chosen as a first preference by 10.4 per cent and

TABLE II
PREFERENCES OF FIRST GRADE TEACHERS AMONG
THREE TYPES OF KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Program	First Preference		Second Preference		Third Preference	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Develop- mental	2	1.5%	78	57.8%	56	41.4%
Readiness	120	88.8%	16	11.8%	0	0%
Academic	14	10.4%	42	31.1%	80	59.2%

the developmental curriculum was selected by two teachers for a percentage of 1.5. The program most frequently chosen as a second preference was the developmental curriculum which was selected by 57.8 per cent. A majority of the first grade teachers indicated the academic kindergarten program to be their third preference.

III. PREFERENCES OF KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE TEACHERS: A COMPARISON

The third question posed in this study was concerned with any similarities or differences that might exist between the preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers. Tables I and II are referred to again in answering this question.

A comparison does indicate some similarities, most

notably in the high degree of preference which both groups expressed for the readiness program. The percentage of teachers in each group selecting this program as their first choice was very similar (85.8 per cent and 88.8 per cent). The developmental program received the highest percentage of choices as a second preference from both the kindergarten and first grade teachers and again the percentages were comparable. Fifty-eight and three-tenths per cent of the kindergarten teachers made this choice and 57.8 per cent of the first grade teachers.

As a third preference both groups selected the academic program although there was some difference between the groups in the percentage of teachers making this choice. In the kindergarten group 67 per cent of the teachers chose academic as their third preference while only 59.2 per cent of the first grade teachers made this selection. More of the first grade teachers selected the developmental program as their third choice. However, it must still be noted that the majority of teachers in both groups chose the academic program as a third preference.

The primary difference between the opinions of the kindergarten and first grade teachers can be seen in the first preferences each group listed. The percentages for the readiness program were essentially the same but the others indicate some difference of opinion. Eight and

seven-tenths per cent of the kindergarten teachers liked the developmental program well enough to list it as their first preference, but only 1.5 per cent of the first grade teachers agreed. More first grade teachers than kindergarten teachers selected an academic kindergarten program as their first choice. This was the opinion of 10.4 per cent of the first grade teachers compared to 5.4 per cent of the kindergarten teachers.

In addition to asking the teachers to rate the three types of kindergarten programs, the opinionnaire also directed them to read six brief statements and mark the two they agreed with most. These statements were related to the three basic kindergarten programs so that each program could be matched with two statements. It was anticipated that a teacher selecting the readiness program as her first preference would also choose the two statements which contained descriptions of a rationale or activities appropriate to this program. The preferences expressed among these six statements provide another basis for comparing the responses of kindergarten and first grade teachers. Table III contains the percentages for each type of statement.

The readiness statements were selected by both groups of teachers as the most highly preferred. This is consistent with the pattern shown among the stated program preferences (Tables I and II). However, while more than 85 per

TABLE III
CHOICES OF STATEMENTS RELATED TO PARTICULAR
KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Grade Level	Developmental Statements		Readiness Statements		Academic Statements	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	44	15%	172	58.5%	82	27.9%
First Grade	29	10.4%	159	57.2%	90	32.4%

cent of the teachers at each level indicated a first preference for readiness programs, only 58 per cent of the activity choices were readiness related, a difference of almost 30 per cent. Many teachers who indicated a preference for a readiness curriculum did not mark the two readiness statements. The readiness program is consistently the most popular, but by varying margins.

In contrast to the pattern evident among the program preferences, the academic statements received the second highest percentages and the developmental statements the lowest percentages. These rankings were reversed among the program preferences. Thirty-two and four-tenths per cent of the first grade teachers chose academic statements as did 27.9 per cent of the kindergarten teachers. Although these percentages are higher than those listed in Table I and Table II, there is one similarity. Again it is noticeable

that first grade teachers are more likely to be academically oriented than are kindergarten teachers. Both the program preferences and the preferred statements show a difference of approximately 5 per cent in this area with the first grade teachers in each case showing greater preference than kindergarten teachers for academic programs and statements.

Among the kindergarten teachers 15 per cent chose developmental statements, but only 10.4 per cent of the first grade teachers selected any. A similar difference between the kindergarten and first grade teachers was found in the expressed preferences in Tables I and II.

If the analysis of the preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers is to be complete, it seems necessary that program ratings and preferred statements both be considered. This procedure was followed when comparing the views of kindergarten and first grade teachers and will be used again in discussing the variables of age, experience, and training. For this reason it seems important that the relationship between stated program preferences and selected statements be examined. Table IV was included for this purpose.

Placement in the three categories was determined in the following manner. If a teacher listed the developmental program as her first preference and also chose the two developmental statements, this was categorized as complete

agreement. If only one developmental statement was selected, it was classified as partial agreement. If neither statement was developmental, as the program preference indicated they should have been, a rating of no agreement was given.

TABLE IV

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STATED KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM PREFERENCES AND CHOICES OF STATEMENTS RELATED TO PARTICULAR PROGRAMS

Grade Level	Complete Agreement		Partial Agreement		No Agreement	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	42	28.1%	90	60.3%	17	11.4%
First Grade	55	40.7%	66	48.9%	15	11.1%
Kindergarten & First Grade Combined	97	34%	156	54.6%	32	11.2%

The first grade teachers had 40.7 per cent instances of complete agreement, while the kindergarten teachers had only 28.1 per cent. The highest percentage of cases for both groups came in the category of partial agreement.

IV. VARIABLES OF AGE, EXPERIENCE, AND TRAINING

All teachers were asked to provide information on their age, number of years teaching experience, and their training. The effect of each of these variables on the

preferences of the teachers was analyzed.

Age was the first variable to be examined. The two categories used were 39 years of age and younger, and 40 years of age and older. Tables V, VI, and VII indicate the results of this examination.

TABLE V
THE RELATIONSHIP OF AGE TO THE PROGRAM PREFERENCES
OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Age	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
39 or less	Developmental	5	7.8%	37	57.4%	22	34.1%
	Readiness	54	83.7%	10	15.5%	0	0%
	Academic	5	7.8%	17	26.4%	42	65.1%
40 or more	Developmental	8	9.4%	50	58.5%	27	31.6%
	Readiness	74	86.6%	11	12.8%	0	0%
	Academic	3	3.5%	24	28%	58	67.9%

TABLE VI
THE RELATIONSHIP OF AGE TO THE PROGRAM PREFERENCES
OF FIRST GRADE TEACHERS

Age	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
39 or less	Developmental	1	2%	27	54%	22	44%
	Readiness	42	84%	8	16%	0	0%
	Academic	7	14%	15	30%	28	56%
40 or more	Developmental	1	1.2%	51	59.2%	34	39.4%
	Readiness	78	90.5%	8	9.3%	0	0%
	Academic	7	8.1%	27	31.3%	52	60.3%

TABLE VII

THE RELATIONSHIP OF AGE TO THE PROGRAM PREFERENCES
OF KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE TEACHERS

Age	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
39 or less	Developmental	6	5.3%	64	56.3%	44	38.7%
	Readiness	96	84.5%	18	15.8%	0	0%
	Academic	12	10.6%	32	28.2%	70	61.6%
40 or more	Developmental	9	5.2%	101	58.6%	61	35.4%
	Readiness	152	88.2%	19	11%	0	0%
	Academic	10	5.8%	51	29.6%	110	63.8%

A comparison of Tables V and VI, which describe separately the preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers in the two age groups, does indicate that some differences are present. Both age groups of kindergarten teachers rate the developmental program higher as a first preference than do the first grade teachers of either age group. Similarly, both age groups of first grade teachers have a higher preference for the academic program than does either age group of the kindergarten teachers. These differences were evident earlier when the preferences of the total group of teachers at each grade level were compared. Accordingly, it seems probable that these differences are attributable to difference in grade level taught and not to difference in age. Differences in the percentages favoring the developmental and academic programs are found between

the kindergarten and first grade teachers on all three variables. Because of this, it seems more essential to look at differences within each table rather than between the kindergarten and first grade tables.

A difference that occurred within all three tables involves the percentages of teachers selecting the academic program as their first preference. The older teachers have slightly less preference for the academic program. The difference for the kindergarten teachers was 4.3 per cent, and for the first grade teachers it was 5.9 per cent. For both groups combined, the difference between the older and younger teachers was 4.8 per cent. This is not a large difference but it was consistently present. These teachers selected the readiness program instead of the academic curriculum. Within each table the percentages of those selecting the developmental program as a first preference were essentially the same regardless of age.

The next analysis involved number of years teaching experience. The two categories established were 10 years or less, and 11 years or more of experience. The relationship of this variable to expressed preferences is shown in Tables VIII, IX, and X. Tables VIII and IX again show a difference between the kindergarten and first grade teachers on the percentage of first preferences for the developmental and academic programs. Aside from this, however, the percentages

are very similar. The per cent of those rating the readiness program as a first choice are all within 4 percentage points. The developmental program was most often selected for the second preference and the academic program for the third preference, regardless of the amount of experience of the teacher.

TABLE VIII

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE TO THE PROGRAM
PREFERENCES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Exp.	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
10 or less	Developmental	4	7.2%	33	59.7%	18	32.6%
	Readiness	47	85.1%	8	14.5%	0	0%
	Academic	4	7.2%	14	25.3%	37	67%
11 or more	Developmental	9	9.5%	54	57.2%	31	32.9%
	Readiness	81	85.9%	13	13.8%	0	0%
	Academic	4	4.2%	27	28.6%	63	66.8%

TABLE IX

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE TO THE PROGRAM
PREFERENCES OF FIRST GRADE TEACHERS

Exp.	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
10 or less	Developmental	0	0%	24	52.1%	22	47.7%
	Readiness	40	86.8%	6	13%	0	0%
	Academic	6	13%	16	34.7%	24	52.1%
11 or more	Developmental	2	2.2%	54	59.9%	34	37.7%
	Readiness	80	88.8%	10	11.1%	0	0%
	Academic	8	8.9%	26	28.9%	56	62.2%

TABLE X

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE TO THE PROGRAM
PREFERENCES OF KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE TEACHERS

Exp.	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
10 or less	Developmental	4	4%	57	56.4%	40	39.6%
	Readiness	87	86.1%	14	13.9%	0	0%
	Academic	10	10%	30	29.7%	61	60.4%
11 or more	Developmental	11	5.9%	108	58.3%	65	35.1%
	Readiness	161	86.9%	23	12.4%	0	0%
	Academic	12	6.5%	53	28.6%	119	64.3%

The last variable to be studied was training. The choices of degree and non-degree teachers are listed in Tables XI, XII, and XIII and show the most noticeable pattern of differences among the three variables considered.

TABLE XI

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TRAINING TO THE PROGRAM
PREFERENCES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Training	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Degree	Developmental	13	11.2%	68	57.8%	35	30.1%
	Readiness	96	82.6%	20	17.2%	0	0%
	Academic	7	6.2%	28	24.1%	81	69.7%
Non-Degree	Developmental	0	0%	19	57%	14	42%
	Readiness	32	96%	1	3%	0	0%
	Academic	1	3%	13	39%	19	57%

TABLE XII

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TRAINING TO THE PROGRAM
PREFERENCES OF FIRST GRADE TEACHERS

Training	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Degree	Developmental	2	1.9%	63	59.2%	41	38.5%
	Readiness	94	88.4%	12	11.3%	0	0%
	Academic	10	9.4%	31	28.6%	65	61.1%
Non-Degree	Developmental	0	0%	15	50%	15	50%
	Readiness	26	86.6%	4	13.3%	0	0%
	Academic	4	13.3%	11	36.6%	15	50%

TABLE XIII

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TRAINING TO THE PROGRAM PREFERENCES
OF KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE TEACHERS

Training	Program	1st Preference		2nd Preference		3rd Preference	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Degree	Developmental	15	6.8%	131	59%	76	34.2%
	Readiness	190	85.5%	32	14.4%	0	0%
	Academic	17	7.6%	59	26.6%	146	65.7%
Non-Degree	Developmental	0	0%	34	54.4%	29	46.4%
	Readiness	58	92.8%	5	8%	0	0%
	Academic	5	8%	24	38.4%	34	54.4%

Table XI presents the views of the kindergarten teachers, the group that has been consistently more in favor of the developmental program. However, it now appears that this choice was not evenly distributed within the group. Among the degree teachers 11.2 per cent chose the developmental program, but not one of the non-degree teachers rated it as a first preference. Instead, 96 per cent of these teachers favored the readiness program, the highest percentage to do so in any of the groups considered.

The responses of the first grade teachers, which are shown in Table XII, do not present as clear a pattern as those of the kindergarten teachers. The non-degree first grade teachers rate the developmental program exactly as the non-degree teachers in the kindergarten group do. None of them would select the developmental program as a first preference. However, this is not really in contrast with the opinions of the rest of the first grade teachers. Only 1.9 per cent of the degree teachers at this level rated developmental as their first preference. This tendency for the first grade teachers to avoid the developmental program has been noted several times.

When the two groups of teachers are combined, as in Table XIII, the difference between the degree and non-degree teachers is still evident. The non-degree teachers' rejection of the developmental program can even be seen in the

percentages for the third preference. The degree teachers rate the academic program as a last preference by a margin of 31.5 per cent. The non-degree teachers only have a difference of 8 per cent between the third preference ratings they give to the academic program and the developmental program. Among the first grade non-degree teachers, the developmental and academic programs even received equal ratings (50 per cent each) as a third preference. It does seem that the training a teacher receives is influential in determining kindergarten program preferences.

All three variables have now been considered in terms of their effect on the program preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers. However, there is still another relationship which it is important to examine. This relationship involves the six statements from which the teachers were asked to make a selection. The variables of age, experience, and training need to be examined in terms of the statements selected by the teachers.

It was established in a previous section of this paper that the relationship between stated program preferences and selected statements was not especially close, the majority of teachers being in the category of only partial agreement. Because of this, the percentages in Tables XIV, XV, and XVI are different from those found in Tables V through XIII. However, it is still possible to look for

similar patterns of response.

TABLE XIV
AGE AND THE SELECTION OF STATEMENTS RELATED
TO PARTICULAR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Age	Developmental Statements		Readiness Statements		Academic Statements	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
39 or less	27	10.6%	127	55.9%	74	32.6%
40 or more	40	11.6%	204	59.2%	98	28.7%

TABLE XV
EXPERIENCE AND THE SELECTION OF STATEMENTS RELATED
TO PARTICULAR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Exp.	Developmental Statements		Readiness Statements		Academic Statements	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
10 or less	24	12%	113	56.5%	65	32.5%
11 or more	43	11.6%	218	58.9%	107	28.9%

Table XIV relates age to the teacher's choice of statements. The percentage of both age groups preferring the developmental statements are similar, as are the per-

centages favoring the readiness statements. However, it does seem that the older teachers have slightly less preference for the academic statements. This is similar to results found when relating age to program preferences, although the difference is not great in either situation.

TABLE XVI
TRAINING AND THE SELECTION OF STATEMENTS RELATED
TO PARTICULAR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Training	Developmental Statements		Readiness Statements		Academic Statements	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Degree	64	14.7%	257	59.1%	123	28.3%
Non- Degree	3	2.4%	74	58.5%	49	38.7%

Table XV presents the results of the analysis involving experience and statement preferences. It would seem that the number of years of teaching experience does not appreciably affect a teacher's choice of statements. This is consistent with the earlier findings of this study involving experience.

The variable that does seem to have a definite effect on the teachers preferences among the three types of statements is training (Table XVI). The percentages for the

readiness statements are essentially the same, as has been the case in most of the previous tables, but differences are evident among the developmental and academic statements. Developmental statements were selected by 14.7 per cent of the degree teachers, but by only 2.4 per cent of the non-degree teachers. This difference was also present in the analysis involving training and the teachers' stated program preferences.

In regard to academic statements, the non-degree teachers selected 9.6 per cent more than did the degree teachers. This difference was not as evident when training was analyzed in terms of the program preferred. Referring back to Table XIII, it can be seen that the academic program was selected as a first preference by 7.6 per cent of the degree teachers and 8 per cent of the non-degree teachers. These percentages are essentially equal. However, the academic program did receive higher percentages as a second choice among the non-degree teachers, 38.4 per cent of whom rated it second compared to only 26.6 per cent of the degree teachers. With this in mind, the results on the academic statements in Table XVI are not entirely unexpected.

V. PREFERENCES AND KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS IN USE

Among the teachers responding to the opinionnaire, 82.6 per cent were using the kindergarten program which they

preferred most and 17.2 per cent would rather select a program other than the one currently used. First grade teachers expressed more dissatisfaction than did the kindergarten teachers but the difference was not great, only 3.8 per cent. The results are summarized in Table XVII.

TABLE XVII
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPRESSED PREFERENCES AND
TYPE OF KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM USED

Grade Level	Agreement		No Agreement	
	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	126	84.4%	23	15.4%
First Grade	110	81.4%	26	19.2%
Kindergarten & First Grade Combined	236	82.6%	49	17.2%

The teachers who seemed to evidence the most dissatisfaction were those using the developmental and academic programs. As Table XVIII illustrates, 10 of the 13 teachers reporting use of the developmental program wished a change. Of the 16 using the academic program, 11 were dissatisfied. The most satisfied teachers seem to be those who are using the readiness program. Out of 256, only 28 indicated a preference for another type of program.

TABLE XVIII
PROGRAMS IN USE AND NUMBER OF TEACHERS
DESIRING A CHANGE

Program Type	Programs in Use N	%	Number of Users Desiring a Change	% of Users Desiring a Change
Developmental	13	4.6%	10	77%
Readiness	256	89.6%	28	11%
Academic	16	5.6%	11	69%

CHAPTER III

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS: CONTRASTING VIEWS AND THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

The preferences of Iowa kindergarten and first grade teachers concerning kindergarten curriculum are somewhat different from opinions expressed by many authors in the field of early childhood education. A great deal of literature in this area, as reported in Chapter I, seems to favor the developmental kindergarten program. Among Iowa teachers, however, the developmental program was a second choice and a rather distant second at that. The readiness program was preferred by most Iowa kindergarten and first grade teachers regardless of their age, experience, or training.

One group that had little preference for the developmental program was the first grade teachers. At this grade level the main emphasis seems to be on reading, and teachers are often judged primarily on the basis of their ability to teach this subject. Because of this, it seems probable that first grade teachers would be inclined to favor a kindergarten program that gave more attention to beginning reading skills and that could, conceivably, make their task a little easier. Their rejection of the developmental program is compatible with this idea as is their higher preference for an academic kindergarten program.

The group which evidenced the least preference for the developmental program was the non-degree teachers, none of whom indicated that they would select a developmental program as their first choice. This is somewhat understandable, though, when their training is considered.

To the majority of people, work and play are two different things and learning is usually considered to be work. The general public has not really accepted the ideas, voiced by many authorities in the field of early childhood education, that there is a great deal of educational value in play and free exploration and that young children should not be led to think of learning as work.

Exposure to the values of this approach is needed if it is to be accepted and the most likely place for this to occur is in college. Without this exposure, the benefits of the developmental program are apt to be overlooked. Of course, the non-degree teachers do have the benefit of some training, but it generally isn't as comprehensive as the training received by the degree teachers who usually have encountered a greater variety of theories and approaches.

In accordance with this idea, the degree teachers did have a noticeably higher preference for the developmental program although still only a small minority (6.8 per cent) selected it as their first preference. Teacher training again affords a possible explanation.

Even a degree teacher, who tends to have a broader

base of knowledge about education, may have received very little in-depth information about kindergarten. In most education classes there are people preparing to teach a variety of grade levels and, because of this, the information offered is usually generalized in an attempt to meet the needs of everyone. Special methods or approaches for kindergarten may be mentioned briefly, but they are usually not given the same emphasis as other methods which are deemed suitable for a variety of grade levels.

More of the degree teachers probably become aware of the theory behind the developmental program, but they often aren't given enough specific information so that they know how to conduct a program of this type in their own classroom. Instead they seem to drift into the pattern used in the school where they begin teaching. It takes a strong person, and also a flexible administration, to try a program that is greatly different from others used in the system. Of the three basic types of kindergarten programs, the developmental is the least like the approaches used at other grade levels.

Recently an effort has been made to remedy the lack of concentrated attention being given to kindergarten education. A special certificate is now required in Iowa for all new graduates wishing to teach kindergarten or preschool. Upon completion of college and the teacher education pro-

gram, a teacher formerly received a certificate valid for kindergarten through eighth grade. Now a number of special courses are required before the candidate can teach kindergarten. Hopefully, these courses can go into the types of kindergarten programs in detail so that the prospective teacher will have a firmer basis for making a selection and also sufficient knowledge so that the preferred program can be initiated and developed successfully. Perhaps with better preparation and a greater variety of ideas to draw upon, the new teacher will feel freer to attempt her own preferred program of instruction even if it is somewhat different from others used in the school system. It will be interesting to note what effect, if any, the new early childhood education courses will have on the types of programs offered in Iowa.

If it is true, as one so often hears, that a teacher tends to teach as she was taught and not as she was told to teach, then these new courses may have little effect on the preferences of Iowa teachers. It is even possible that this is the reason for the present disparity between the preferences of Iowa teachers and the preferences of many experts in this field. Perhaps prospective teachers are being made sufficiently aware of the developmental program but are rejecting it in favor of a more familiar and comfortable pattern of teaching.

It does seem likely that previous experiences would contribute to a teacher's choice of a program, but certainly this is not the only factor involved. A more important consideration in determining choice of program may be the community or area of the community in which a teacher finds herself employed. All five and six year-olds do not come to school with the same experiences or knowledge. Some kindergarten teachers may find themselves with a class that has had preschool training, frequent library visits, and many educational experiences. Other teachers will be dealing with children who are quite deprived in terms of these early learning opportunities. The question here is whether the same type of program is appropriate for use in both classrooms.

To some educators the answer is yes. They feel that a certain type of program is superior in all situations and that a teacher can make sufficient adaptations within that program so that it meets the needs of all the children involved. Others would say that different programs are needed, although there is disagreement as to which program fits which situation. The most frequent response is that the children with the greater educational background need a more academic program. However, this is not a unanimous opinion. Engelmann believes that the deprived children will not catch up unless given specific academic training, par-

ticularly in the area of language skills.¹

The amount of disagreement that is evident certainly indicates a need for more research in this area. If teachers and other authorities are to provide a united leadership in early childhood education, then evaluation of the three types of programs must be undertaken by both groups. It seems necessary to determine whether different types of programs work better with children of different backgrounds or whether one program is basically superior. This will become an increasingly important issue as more and more children begin to come to kindergarten with preschool experience.

Emotional and social growth will need to be considered in addition to academic growth if one is concerned with what is best for the total child. One of the most frequently voiced criticisms of the academic program is that it involves too much pressure. This factor must be considered if the matter is to be resolved.

In addition to evaluating programs, it would also seem important to consider the role of the teacher. Perhaps it is the teacher which is the crucial factor, not the program. If this is true, then it is essential that teacher

¹"A New Approach to Head Start: the Bereiter and Engelmann Method," Phi Delta Kappan, XLIX (March, 1968), 387.

attitudes and behavior patterns be analyzed in terms of their effect on the learning of young children.

A possible result of this research may be to improve the image of the classroom teacher. Perhaps the Iowa teachers' preference for the readiness program will be substantiated and the "experts" preference for the developmental program proven to be erroneous. Thirteen Iowa teachers have tried the developmental program recommended by these experts and 10 of the 13, or 77 per cent, do not want to continue using it. The teachers who work with these children every day may indeed have a better perception of the needs of today's young children. This must also be considered, in addition to previous suggestions, as a possible reason for the discrepancy between the preferences of Iowa teachers and those of authorities in early childhood education.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Kindergarten education was selected as the topic of this study because of the current controversy concerning the most effective type of curriculum for this age level. A survey of the literature in this area indicated that there were three basic types of programs: developmental, readiness, and academic. Most of the authors in this area expressed a preference for the developmental program. However, there was very little information on the preferences of classroom teachers. Accordingly, this study was designed to discover their views.

The following questions were selected and an opinionnaire was designed to answer them.

1. What per cent of kindergarten teachers in Iowa favor each of the three basic types of kindergarten programs?
2. What per cent of first grade teachers in Iowa favor each of the three basic types of kindergarten programs?
3. What similarities and differences exist in the preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers concerning kindergarten programming?
4. What, if any, relationships exist between program preferences and such variables as age, teaching experience, and training?
5. What agreement is there between expressed preferences and actual programs in use?

This opinionnaire was validated before use by consultation with an advisor and a trial test with four teachers.

Two cover letters explaining the importance of the study were also written and included with the opinionnaires. One letter went to the principals of the schools selected and requested that he choose a kindergarten teacher and a first grade teacher to participate in the study. The other cover letter was for the teachers who participated.

Each teacher received a stamped, return envelope with her opinionnaire. These envelopes were numbered so that it could be determined where to send follow up letters if they were necessary.

The population for the study was the kindergarten and first grade teachers in Iowa. A sample was selected by using a list of Iowa school districts ranked in order of size from largest to smallest. Every third district was chosen from this list. Within each district, individual elementary schools were then selected. If there were less than five elementary schools in the district, only one was randomly selected. If there were more than five, every third elementary school was chosen. The principals in these schools selected the kindergarten and first grade teachers who comprised the sample.

The majority of the data received was in the form of checked responses. The two open-end questions concerned age and number of years of teaching experience. Categories were determined for these two variables after the returned

opinionnaires had been examined. In answering the five questions posed in the study, percentages were used and were organized in tabular form.

The percentages used in answering questions 1, 2, and 3 indicated both similarities and differences in the preferences of kindergarten and first grade teachers. Eighty-five and eight-tenths per cent of the kindergarten teachers and 88.8 per cent of the first grade teachers selected the readiness program as their first preference. These scores are essentially the same. However, there was a slight difference in the percentages of teachers choosing the developmental program or the academic program as their first preference. A higher percentage of the kindergarten teachers selected the developmental program and more first grade teachers chose the academic program. Considering the stress that is placed on reading in most first grades, it is not surprising that the teachers at this level would prefer more attention to skill development in kindergarten.

Of the three variables examined in question 4, only training was very related to the program preferences of the teachers. None of the non-degree teachers selected the developmental program as a first preference, but 6.8 per cent of the degree teachers did. These percentages, particularly those of the non-degree teachers, are surprisingly low when compared to the high regard expressed for the

developmental program by most of the authorities in early childhood education.

The data compiled in answering question 5 indicate that 15.4 per cent of the kindergarten teachers and 19.2 per cent of the first grade teachers were dissatisfied with the kindergarten program currently in use in their school. Both the developmental and academic programs had high percentages of dissatisfied teachers (77 per cent and 69 per cent), while only 11 per cent of the teachers using the readiness program wanted to change to another type.

The results on the developmental program suggest the possibility that the Iowa teachers may be more aware of the needs of today's kindergarten children than the "experts." If the teachers who have tried the developmental program recommended by the experts do not want to continue using it, then it may not be as effective as was previously thought.

Another possibility may be that the teachers have not been made sufficiently aware of the benefits of the developmental program or how to use it in their classroom. If this is the case, then the training given to teachers should be examined. More courses which deal specifically with early childhood education are currently being offered and are now required for a certificate to teach kindergarten or pre-school in Iowa. This may have an effect on the programs preferred by future teachers.

Research is needed in order to resolve the conflicting opinions on the most effective type of kindergarten program. This research should examine social and emotional growth as well as academic, and should determine whether one program is superior with all types of children or whether different programs are needed for children with different experiences and backgrounds.

It also seems important that prospective teachers of young children spend more time observing and assisting in a variety of classroom approaches. This experience and training which is more specific in regard to future grade level specialization should give teachers a better basis for choosing a kindergarten program.

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APPENDIX A
Opinionnaire and Cover Letters

To: Elementary School Principal
From: Mrs. Carol Steilen
Re: Survey Concerning Kindergarten Programs

Enclosed you will find two copies of an opinionnaire concerning kindergarten curriculum. Please select a kindergarten teacher and a first grade teacher from your school to participate in this study. It is important that you choose teachers that you feel will be conscientious in replying.

This study has been initiated for two major purposes. First of all, it is designed to discover what type or types of programs Iowa teachers feel to be most effective in the education of young children. Recent research in this area and the growth of preschools for the 3 and 4-year-old have shown the increasing importance that is being attached to a child's first learning experiences. The public schools must assume their share of the responsibility for the development of a suitable curriculum for this age level.

A second purpose of this study is to encourage teachers, both those directly involved in the study and those with whom they interact, to stop and seriously think about what they are doing in their classrooms, and why they are doing it. This process of self evaluation, a mark of the truly professional person, is an area which is overlooked by too many educators.

For the benefit of the kindergarten and first grade teachers you select, a brief letter of explanation is

included with each opinionnaire. Stamped, return addressed envelopes are also provided for their convenience. Your cooperation and that of your teachers is greatly appreciated.

To: Kindergarten and First Grade Teachers
 From: Mrs. Carol Steilen
 Re: Survey Concerning Kindergarten Programs

Attached to this letter you will find an opinionnaire on the subject of kindergarten curriculum. This opinionnaire is being sent to a randomly selected sample composed of Iowa kindergarten and first grade teachers, the sample being limited to these two grade levels because of their greater familiarity with the methods used and the problems encountered in the education of young children.

Kindergarten education was chosen for this study because of a deep conviction that the early years of a child's education are crucial in determining attitudes toward learning, attitudes toward one's ability and toward one's value as a person, and in providing a strong foundation for future learning. A desire to see improvement in the education offered to young children was an important consideration in the initiation of this study.

All replies will be strictly confidential so please feel free to be perfectly candid in stating your opinions. If you would like to be notified of the results of this study, send me your address and a copy will be mailed to you when the study is completed.

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THE KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM

1. Grade Currently Taught
 _____ Kindergarten
 _____ First Grade
2. Sex
 _____ Male
 _____ Female
3. Age _____
4. Number of Years Teaching Experience (count current year as completed) _____
5. Educational Level
 _____ Non-degree (Less than B.A.)
 _____ B.A.
 _____ B.A. plus 15 or more credit hours
 _____ M.A.
 _____ Ed.S.
 _____ Ph.D.

6. Special Training (Montessori etc. - please specify) _____

Three major types of kindergarten programs are described here.

Developmental

The developmental kindergarten stresses play as the child's natural method of learning. This program seeks to encourage the child's intellectual growth by providing a variety of stimulating play experiences within the classroom. No specific skills or subjects are formally taught and no workbooks are used. The primary concern is for enriching the present world of the child.

Readiness

The readiness kindergarten does not look unfavorably on play and does include this in its program. Added to this, however, is work on some basic skills such as writing of one's name, visual and auditory discrimination, counting, and other simple number concepts. Reading readiness workbooks are often used but not all are pressured for mastery if they are not felt to be ready for this type of instruction.

Academic

The academic kindergarten is more structured and formal than the readiness program. Often time allotments are made for the teaching of specific subjects (i.e. math the first twenty-five minutes, then science, etc.). Reading, writing of sentences and even simple stories, arithmetic, and scientific facts are taught. These skills and subjects are presented with the idea that the children can and should achieve some mastery of them. Play is not rated very highly as a learning experience.

Please rank these programs 1, 2, and 3 in the order of your preference for them; number 1 being the type you prefer most, etc.

_____ Developmental
 _____ Readiness
 _____ Academic

The kindergarten program presently in use in your school could best be categorized as: (check one only)

- Developmental
 Readiness
 Academic

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Please mark (x) the two statements with which you most agree.

1. Research has shown that children can learn reading, arithmetic, and other subjects at a much earlier age than had been previously thought. Realizing this, educators must not deny children this chance for a headstart in America's competitive and college-oriented society.
2. Kindergarten is a transition from the informality of the home to the more organized atmosphere of the primary grades. A good kindergarten, therefore, will have elements of both situations.
3. Many schools today are putting an increasing amount of pressure on their younger students. In some cases the push for achievement even begins in kindergarten. Instead of allowing children to be childlike in their learning methods, interests, and activities, the schools seem determined to make them into miniature adults. Concern is now being voiced that too much of this early pressure may make later learning more difficult to achieve.
4. There are some aspects of reading readiness which the child generally does not acquire before coming to school. It is the school's duty, therefore, to set up some type of systematic program to insure that these essentials are mastered prior to the start of formal reading instruction. In general, this is the task of the kindergarten.
5. Children are becoming increasingly bored with what they are being offered in today's kindergarten programs. They are coming to school with better vocabularies and a broader range of experiences because of travel, television, attendance at pre-school or day care centers, and the educational toys provided by increasingly affluent parents.

The kindergarten curriculum must be updated and made more challenging in order to meet their needs.

6. — Workbooks have no place in the kindergarten program. A five-year-old learns by experimentation and play, not by sitting docilely filling out workbooks.

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Please feel free to add any comments you may have concerning kindergarten education or this opinionnaire. Your cooperation has been greatly appreciated.